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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/S AND H
H PLEASE PASS TO HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MAJORITY STAFF DR. MARSH

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [OVIP](#) [AO](#)
SUBJECT: STAFFDEL MARSH ENGAGES ON POLITICAL, SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT

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11. (SBU) Summary. During an April 9-12 visit, Staffdel Marsh met with top government officials, including Foreign Minister Assuncao Afonso dos Anjos, Secretary General of the MPLA Dino Matross, and Acting President of the National Assembly Joana Lina Ramos. Marsh participated in discussions with representatives of civil society, the economic and financial community, and President of UNITA Isaias Samakuva. In Kwanza Sul and Benguela provinces, Marsh saw first hand USG assistance in the areas of health and agricultural development. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Senior Professional Staff Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs visited Angola April 9-12. Marsh met with government and party officials, visited USAID-supported projects, and met with civil society and international NGO officials. Marsh's conversations on elections and revision of the constitution are reported reftel.

13. (SBU) In an April 9 meeting with Dr. Marsh, Foreign Minister Assuncao dos Anjos noted the robust U.S.-Angolan relationship and emphasized the Angolan interest in deepened economic cooperation. He hoped the recently negotiated trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA) would be signed shortly. Dos Anjos said the GRA sought to diversify its economy, particularly in agriculture, and for that reason was "very interested in AGOA." Dos Anjos was particularly eager to meet with Secretary Clinton in May and expressed his hope that President dos Santos and President Obama would meet in the near future. Marsh highlighted the importance of a Treasury Department resident advisor for transparency and development. Charge raised the possibility of a Peace Corps presence in Angola and informed the minister that a Peace Corps team was planning a visit. Dos Anjos welcomed such a visit. Marsh told Dos Anjos that she would be happy to arrange a meeting with the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee when the minister came to Washington.

14. (SBU) On April 9, Acting President of the National Assembly Joana Lina Ramos briefed Marsh on the operations of the Angolan parliament and discussed the constitutional revision process. Ramos emphasized that, despite its 82 percent majority, the MPLA was reaching out to opposition members. Ramos said that opposition party representatives are entitled to speak out on any piece of legislation brought to the floor and may participate in the writing of legislation in any of the nine parliamentary working committees. Ramos said that committee hearings are open to the public on a case-by-case basis. A subsequent meetings with MPLA Secretary General Dino Matross and UNITA President Samakuva focused on the constitution and prospects for presidential elections and are reported reftel.

¶5. (SBU) In a heated dinner conversation at Charge's residence, representatives of civil society and international NGOs bemoaned MPLA dominance of the political playing field in Angola. The representative of the Association for Justice, Peace and Democracy, one of Angola's premier human rights organizations, was particularly forceful in voicing his concerns over the limited space offered for public discussion of human rights, political freedoms, and good governance. He argued that the MPLA exercised strict control over the media and civil society by using economic and financial levers to limit the livelihoods of journalists and intellectuals who might oppose the ruling party.

¶6. (U) During a two-day trip to Kwanza Sul and Benguela provinces, Marsh visited three assistance programs and discussed the work environment for non-governmental organizations with international organizations. She saw two malaria-control activities funded by USAID under the President's Malaria Initiative and implemented by Africare and Catholic Relief Services. Marsh discussed economic development, market linkages and access to credit with Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA) reps and local banana farmers in Benguela.

¶7. (SBU) In a April 11 dinner, the senior World Bank economist in Angola described a likely nominal GDP decline of 17 to 23 percent for 2009, but was optimistic about Angola's mid to long-term growth and development prospects. He believed Angola was right to focus on rebuilding its infrastructure first among its myriad development needs in the wake of the 27 year civil war. He believed that the GRA understood that it now had to focus on the social development

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needs such as health, and education. He noted that the GRA was taking concrete steps to address these issues, but that it had some significant headwinds due to the lack of human capital in these areas. On transparency, he believed Angola was moving in the right direction by publishing more of the budget and other financial data online, but it was still inconsistent in this and at times it had removed data from online sources.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: Staffdel Marsh received a remarkably high-level and enthusiastic reception from the Angolan government, especially considering her arrival in Angola over a holiday weekend. The Angolans quite clearly demonstrated the importance they attach to such attention. End comment.
HAWKINS